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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 000314

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: GHANA AT 50: SECURITY CHALLENGES

REF: A. ACCRA 939
[1](#)B. ACCRA 1855

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.4 d and e.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: This is the third in a series of cables on Ghana at 50. Ghana faces a host of security challenges. Narcotics trafficking is probably the most nefarious, with the potential to corrode democracy and stability over time. While in many ways Ghana is relatively safe, especially compared to some other countries in the region, violent street crime and financial crime are on the rise and contribute to Embassy Accra's status as a high crime threat post. Crime and traditional conflicts are exacerbated by an abundance of small arms. Extremist Islamic elements, traditional conflicts, corruption and the combination of porous borders with fragile neighbors make Ghana vulnerable to potential terrorism. The military is disciplined and apolitical (and is likely to remain so in the current environment) but it could pose a significant potential threat to Ghana's stability if the economy and/or political conditions deteriorate. End Summary.

Narcotics

[1](#)2. (C) Ghana is increasingly becoming a transit point for cocaine and heroin bound for Europe and the United States. Narcotics scandals over the past year (one involving the disappearance of 2 tons of cocaine) have implicated senior police officials. The GOG does not have a handle on the problem and President Kufuor admitted to us in discussions of the narcotics problem that at times he does not know who to trust in his national security apparatus. More worrisome, recent GOG meetings suggest the government has decided against seriously tackling the problem until after the 2008 election to avoid potential political embarrassment.

Crime

[1](#)3. (SBU) Corruption, poverty and a lack of professionalism in the police and judiciary have resulted in a rise in violent crime and vigilante justice. As reported ref B, a 2005 UNDP study estimates there are 125,000 illicit guns in Ghana, which contribute to violent crime. In addition, as reported ref A, financial crime has increased significantly. Our consular section has seen a major increase in cases of Internet scams this year. Police statistics point to a 50 percent jump in advance fee fraud.

Conflict

[1](#)4. (SBU) Every year, there are a number of chieftaincy and traditional disputes in Ghana, many of which have political

overtones and some of which result in violence. The three northern regions of Ghana in particular have a history of ethnic and chieftaincy conflict, fueled by the easy availability of small arms. In 2002, a chieftaincy dispute in Northern Region resulted in the murder of the paramount chief of Dagbon (Ya-Na) and 40 of his entourage, and the imposition of a three-year State of Emergency in the region. These kinds of conflict are unlikely to be regime threatening but will continue to challenge Ghana's security apparatus.

Terrorism

15. (C) Ghana has never had a terrorist incident and the GOG is very cooperative on counterterrorism issues. The majority of Ghana's 15-20 percent Muslim population is moderate. Nonetheless, there are extremist Islamic elements here. Together with widespread corruption, porous borders, narcotrafficking, and inadequately trained and equipped law enforcement, this poses a potential terrorist threat that bears watching.

The Military

16. (C) The Ghana Armed Forces are disciplined, apolitical and currently appear committed to supporting civilian rule and democracy. They understand that Ghanaians and the international community are intolerant of military adventurism. The military also benefits from participation in UN peacekeeping missions (at any given time, 35% of the armed forces are abroad on peacekeeping missions). This participation effectively increases military compensation, keeps them away from potential mischief making at home, and

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exposes them to the deleterious effects of conflict first hand.

17. (C) Nonetheless, many Ghanaians still fear a military coup, and the GOG is perpetually paranoid about the possibility. Although we believe there is currently a low probability of military intervention, it remains a significant potential threat to Ghana's stability, especially if led by a charismatic leader in the face of worsening economic problems and/or an increased public perception of a weak/corrupt civilian government.

Comment

18. (SBU) Ghana does not have the kinds of strong ethnic and regional tensions that have generated conflict in other countries in the region. The past year has brought controversies -- petrol price increases, an energy crunch, corruption and narcotics scandals, and NDC protests against a controversial expatriate voting bill -- which have generated significant media debate but no feeling of political crisis. In many ways, Ghana is relatively safe, especially compared to other countries in the neighborhood. Violent crime is still manageable and the GOG generally respects the rule of law.

19. (C) Continued stability is promising, but by no means guaranteed. The security agencies lack capacity and are not aggressively confronting some major looming problems, such as financial crime and narcotics trafficking. These underlying security challenges, not to mention political and economic vulnerabilities (reported septels), require careful monitoring to help ensure that this fragile African success story stays on track.

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